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ABSTRACT

This teacher guide contains 12 detailed local history investigations, complete with procedures, required materials, and evaluation exercises, based on performance objectives that support the Montgomery County (Maryland) Public Schools' social studies and mathematics instructional objectives for grades K-6. The exercises draw students into their local environment and put them in contact with learning resources in the community. Before beginning each on-site investigation, students should visit libraries, historical societies, or county courthouses to find related materials in census and tax records, land titles, pension rolls, election returns, diary entries, letters, and photographs. Sites for investigation are an old railroad station, farm, town, church, graveyard, log cabin, barn, bridge, foundation, mill, and street. Measuring buildings, using and drawing maps, observing architectural and design features, comparing construction techniques, calculating ages and dates from tombstones, and writing imaginary letters and diaries are among the suggested procedures for learning about people of the past and how they lived. (NEC)

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## Activities for Studying

# Local History

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OUTDOOR EDUCATION SERIES
ACTIVITIES FOR STUDYING LOCAL HISTORY

Bulletin No. 247-L

Montgomery County Public Schools
Rockville, Maryland 20850
Edward Andrews
Interim Superintendent of Schools

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# INTRODUCTION

There are many places in the local community that can be a rich resource for learning about people of the past, who they were and how they lived. This collection of local history investigations is meant to draw students into their local environment and put them in contact with the learning resources about them. Each investigation suggests the following:

Performance Objectives
Procedures
Materials

Performance objectives support Montgomery County Public Schools' social studies and mathematics instructional objectives. The social studies instructional objectives identified in the K-6 Social Studies Design (approved by the Council on Instruction in April, 1977) include:

I. Describe circumstances which have affected settlement patterns within the United States

II. Indicate ways by which people today investigate the past

III. Compare ways in which people over time have adapted to physical environments in the United States

lV. Describe ways in which Americans perpetuate their cultural or ethnic heritage

V. Identify ways in which people and events of the past influence the way we live today

VI. Describe the contributions of various ethnic groups in the United States

VII. Identify a variety of ways people in the United States have utilized resources for goods and services

VIII. Indicate examples of aesthetic expression which reflect American culture or experience

The mathematics instructional objectives include:

Problem-solving Skills

I. Recognize and define problems

II. Hypothesize solutions

V. Interpret and evaluate information

VI. Summarize and draw conclusions

Map and Globe Reading Skills

I. Develop ability to locate self in the immediate environment

III. Develop concepts of spatial relationships

VI. Develop some understanding of size and scale

IX. Orient map and identify cardinal directions

Mathematics

Whole Numbers

II. Perform computation with whole numbers

V. Solve problems involving whole numbers

Geometry and Measurement

I. Use and interpret the language and symbols of geometry and measurement

II. Describe the physical world, using the language, skills, and tools of geometry and measurement

III. Perform computation involving measurement

V. Solve problems involving geometry and measurement

Common Fractions

I. Use and interpret common fractions

Before students begin each on-site investigation, they should visit the school or public library, historical society, or county courthouse to find related material documenting information about each place. Census and tax records, land titles, pension rolls, election returns, diary entries, letters, and photographs shed further light on each "history mystery" of the local community. Students should also encourage local "oldtimers" to share their memories of the place in the past. Of course, the teacher should obtain permission from current owners before conducting investigations on private property.

## Activity No. 1: An Old Railroad Station Investigation

Performance Objective: The student will make observations at an old railroad station to determine how and why the station functioned and will make a comparison of it to a modern railroad station.

Program of Studies:
Social Studies, I, II, III, V
Problem-solving Skills, I, III, V, VI
Map and Globe Reading Skills, I, IX
Mathematics, Whole Numbers, II, V
Geometry and Measurement, II, III

Procedures:

1. Identify the uses of various sections of the station and compare it to a modern station.

2. Ask, "In what compass direction do the tracks lie?"

3. Measure the interior floor space and compare it to the floor space in an average modern home.

4. Using an appropriate map, determine what other towns the tracks went through and how the map indicates the presence of railroad stations.

5. Ask such questions as "How was this station heated?", "What might have been the various jobs at this station?", and "How would people have arrived at this station at the turn of the century?"

6. Make a sketch of the floor plan; then discuss why certain things are there and what might be missing.

7. Determine what changes have occurred in the mode of operation in the past 75 years.

8. Ask, "If this station were to be preserved, how would support be gathered?" and "To what useful purpose could the station be put if it were preserved?"

Materials:

| | |
|---|---|
| Tape measure | Maps |
| Compass | Sketching materials |

Evaluation:

1. If a ticket to D.C. from Rockville cost 65 cents per round trip, and the distance was 10 miles one way, how much did it cost per mile? How much would it cost for a weekly ticket with a 10 percent discount?

2. Write a story about a ticket seller, passenger, or baggage clerk and his part in the operation of a railroad station.

Activity 2: An Old Farm Investigation

Performance Objective: The student will visit an old farm to make observations, measurements, and deductions and then determine what type of farm it was, why it was located where it was, and the location and use of various buildings.

Program of Studies: Social Studies, I, II, III
Problem-solving Skills, I, III, V, VI
Map and Globe Reading Skills, I, III, VI, IX

Procedures:

1. From observations, speculate on what the various farm buildings were used for.

2. Sketch on a map the route taken from school to the farm; then ask, "Are there street names along the route that might have some historical significance?"

3. Determine the main road location in relation to the farm.

4. Locate at least two types of boundary markings, such as stones, trees, stone walls, or streams which were used to indicate the farm's boundaries.

5. Determine if there is more than one entrance to the farm. If so, ask, "Why is there more than one?"

6. Ask, "Was there a mill nearby that the farm used? If so, how can you tell?"

7. Ask, "If you knew what type of farm this was, e.g., dairy, grain, or cattle, what other buildings would be needed, e.g., ice house, corn crib, smoke house, silo, or barn? Where could they have been located?" Look for evidence of the existence of any.

8. Using a map, speculate on where the farmer would most likely sell his product(s).

9. From your observations, decide the type of farm this was.

10. List five uses for this land when the farmer stopped farming it.

Materials:

Various maps
Sketching materials

Evaluation:

1. Using rectangles, squares, and circles, draw a diagram of the buildings, fences, and roads as this farm might have looked 50 years ago. Label and key the diagram.

## Activity 3: An Old Town Investigation

Performance Objective: The student will record observations and take measurements to help determine the kinds of buildings in an old town, the function of the buildings, and the role the town played in a growing area.

Program of Studies: Social Studies, I, II, III
Problem-solving Skills, I, III, V, VI
Map and Globe Reading Skills, I, III, IX
Mathematics, Whole Numbers, II, V
Geometry and Measurement, I, II, III

Procedures:

1. Visit an old town.
2. Measure the size of the town on an old map. Record the distance from a major city. Measure the distance from your school.
3. Compute the time of travel from various locations on the map by horse, foot, or carriage.
4. Tour the town, locate old buildings, and the sites of buildings no longer existant.
5. Record the major plan of the town on graph paper, noting major streets, minor streets, alleys, cul-de-sacs. Include an arrow indicating north. Hypothesize the reasons for such a design of the town.
6. Identify the materials used in construction and decide why they were used.
7. Observe the architectural features and design of these buildings, noting windows, fireplaces, number of rooms, unusual features, and size of each building. Speculate as to the use of each room.
8. Look for buildings other than residences and public service structures, and speculate on their uses and importance to the town.
9. Compare the size and construction of a building to its importance in a functioning town.
10. Use a compass to determine the direction the front entrances of the buildings faced and try to determine if there is any significance.
11. Use the nearest graveyard to locate family names, dates, and other information about the old town. (See the graveyard investigation.)
12. Speculate on why the town is located where it is. Look for its source(s) of water and any mines or mill sites nearby.
13. Discuss how the town was and how it has changed. Take photographs to help make comparisons.

Materials:

Paper and pencil
Camera
Tally sheet
Compass
Tape measure
Ruler
Reference and resource material

Evaluation:

1. Do a descriptive writing of a typical day in the life of a character who might have lived in the town at a particular time.

2. Prepare a question sheet to use in interviewing residents who have lived in the town many years.

Activity 4: An Old Church or House of Worship Investigation

Performance Objective: The student will visit an old church and make specific observations and measurements of both the exterior and interior to determine how it was built and how it was used in the community during a certain period in history.

Program of Studies: Social Studies, I, II, VI
Problem-solving Skills, I, III, V, VI
Map and Globe Reading Skills, I, IX
Mathematics, Geometry and Measurement, I, II, III, V

Procedures:

A. Investigating the exterior

1. Identify the building materials and form a hypothesis as to why they were used.
2. If there is a steeple, discuss possible reasons for it.
3. Locate a cornerstone, date marker, or any evidence that indicates the age of the church.
4. Speculate on how the church was built and what kinds of tools were used for the construction.
5. Measure the doorways; then discuss possible reasons for differences in size.
6. Measure the perimeter of the church and compute the area. Compare the size with churches of today and discuss reasons for the differences.
7. Look for evidence of the entrance road, old and/or new.
8. Locate evidence of any old walls, fireplaces, or tombstones.
9. Determine if the (stained glass) windows are a source of information regarding the church and its people.
10. Discuss the location of the church windows in relation to sunlight.
11. Speculate as to the church's role in the community, i.e., religious purposes, town meetings, and so on.
12. Sketch the church and the surrounding area. Try to determine why it was built and why it was built where it is.

B. Investigating the interior

1. Look for a vestibule, atrium, or entrance way.
2. Locate aisles, measure the width, and compare with designs of today.
3. Examine the pews as to their construction and type of wood. Look for evidence of reconstruction.

An Old Church or House of Worship Investigation cont.

4. Estimate the number of people that could have attended services at any one time.

5. Identify the type of ceiling construction and materials used.

6. Locate evidence of method of heating.

7. Look for any living quarters adjacent to the church.

8. Discuss the way(s) in which the church was lit.

9. Make a sketch of the floor plan of the church and discuss why things are arranged the way they are.

10. If there is a pulpit, discuss the importance of where the pulpit was located.

Materials:

Paper and pencil
Compass
Tape measure

Evaluation:

1. List at least five ways in which wood was used in the church structure.

2. List at least three differences in the construction between an old and a modern church.

## Activity 5: An Old Graveyard Investigation

Performance Objective: The student will collect information from an old graveyard and relate this data to the history of the graveyard as well as the history of the local area.

Program of Studies: Social Studies, II, IV, V
Problem-solving Skills, I, III, V, VI
Mathematics, Whole Numbers, II, V,
Common Fractions, I

Procedures:

1. Visit an old graveyard.
2. Find dates on tombstones that determine the following:
   a) Oldest grave
   b) Most recent grave
   c) Oldest person
   d) Youngest person
3. Copy an unusual epitaph. Rewrite it in modern English.
4. Determine if the graveyard is predominently of a single family and if the last names give evidence of their ethnic background.
5. If a fence surrounds the graveyard, determine what it is made of; then decide what percentage of the graveyard is filled with graves.
6. Decide whether there is enough information to give support to a possible epidemic at a particular time.
7. Speculate whether the tombstones and the general appearance of the graveyard can reveal the standard of living of a particular family or era.
8. Sketch some of the stones. Determine if these stones were bought or hand carved and the type of material used.
9. Identify historical events that occurred during the years the graveyard was used and any effect they might have had on the people who lived in the area.
10. Determine the average age at death of those buried in the graveyard and compare to the average life span today.

Materials:

Paper and pencil

Evaluation:

1. List differences between this cemetery and a modern memorial garden.
2. Describe what particular pieces of information helped reveal some of the area's history.

## Activity 6: A Log Cabin Investigation

Performance Objective: The student will make specific observations and measurements to help determine how a log cabin was built.

Program of Studies: Social Studies, II, V

Problem-solving Skills, I, III, V

Procedures:

1. Visit an old log cabin.
2. Identify the building materials and form an hypothesis on why they were used.
3. Speculate on how the log cabin was built and what kinds of tools were used for making:

   a) Logs
   b) Shingles
   c) Chinking
   d) Chimney
   e) Floor
   f) Windows and doors

4. Figure the area and volume of the living space and compare to present homes. Discuss reasons for the differences.
5. Locate the fireplace and look for evidence of other uses besides heating.
6. Sketch the cabin and surrounding area and speculate on why it was built where it is.

Materials:

Paper and pencil
Tape measure

Evaluation:

1. Write a typical day's entry in a diary of a person living in this log cabin.
2. Describe the environmental impact if everyone lived in log cabins today.
3. List four different tools you would use to construct a log cabin and how you would use them.

## Activity 7: Equipping a Log Cabin

Performance Objective: The student will speculate on the type and source of furniture and tools necessary to equip a log cabin.

Program of Studies: Social Studies, II, III, V, VII
Problem-solving Skills, I, III, V, VI
Mathematics, Geometry and Measurement, I, II, III, V

Procedures:

1. Visit a log cabin and assume the role of a pioneer having to furnish your cabin.
2. Measure the interior length, width, height, and determine the total living dimensions.
3. List some typical activities you would perform in a day's time in the cabin. Compare them to activities that take place in your home today. Include similarities or differences in tools and appliances you would use.
4. Indicate what furniture (if any) would be in your cabin.
5. Speculate on how this furniture would be acquired.
6. Discuss using the materials which are found in nature as a substitute for this furniture.
7. List ten tools or pieces of equipment which you think would be necessary for you to live in and care for your cabin.
8. Indicate how you might acquire the above tools.
9. List the skills pioneers needed to make all their own furniture and equipment.

Materials:

Paper and pencil
Tape measure

Evaluation:

1. Write a letter to the "family you left behind in England," describing how you equipped your log cabin.
2. List ten advantages or disadvantages in equipping a log cabin today compared to 100 years ago.

Activity 8: An Old Barn Investigation

Performance Objective: The student will describe the construction of a barn and its uses.

Program of Studies: Social Studies, II, V, VI
Map and Globe Reading Skills, IX
Mathematics, Geometry and Measurement, I, II, III, V

Procedures:

1. Visit an old barn.

2. Identify the materials used in constructing this barn, where these materials came from, and whether the same materials would be used in constructing a modern barn.

3. Try to determine whether the barn has had any additions or deletions; if so, why and when.

4. Define the primary use of the barn and the purpose for the different areas of the barn.

5. Compile a list of tools that might have been used in building this barn.

6. Sketch the barn after measuring to determine its dimensions.

7. Locate any unique features that are a part of the barn, such as a spring house, root cellar, slot windows, blacksmithing area, or silo and identify the functions of each one.

8. Decide what geometric shape this barn most closely resembles and advantages and disadvantages to the design.

9. After determining what direction the barn faces, hypothesize as to the reason for building it in this location.

10. Speculate as to what a typical "barn raising" might have been like and if it is still done today.

Materials:

Paper and pencil
Tape measure
Compass

Evaluation:

1. List construction skills needed to build a barn.

2. Sketch one type of barn and write a description of its use.

## Activity 9: An Old Bridge Investigation

Performance Objective: The student will make specific observations and measurements to help determine how and why a bridge was built.

Program of Studies: Social Studies, II, V
Problem-solving Skills, I, III, V, VI
Mathematics, Whole Numbers, II, V,
Geometry and Measurement, I, II, III, V

Procedures:

1. Visit an old bridge.

2. Locate geometric shapes in the bridge's framework and discuss the importance of these geometric shapes to the stability of the bridge.

3. Measure the length, width, and height of the bridge, record the data, and then use it to make a scale drawing on graph paper.

4. Identify the materials used in this bridge and speculate as to where the raw material came from and where it was refined or shaped.

5. Decide why a bridge was put here, what it connects, and what type of traffic it was designed for.

6. Discuss the use this bridge might have had during any local historical events.

7. List what tools might have been used to build this bridge.

8. Speculate as to why some bridges were covered.

Materials:

Graph paper
Paper and pencil
Tape measure

Evaluation:

1. Delineate an alternative route it would be necessary to use if the bridge were temporarily out of commission.

2. Assume the old bridge needs replacement. Sketch a new bridge for the one you are investigating.

3. A farmer who believes that a bridge across a stream would be helpful to himself and others has been told by the local county officials to write a letter giving reasons supporting the construction of a bridge near his farm. Play the role of the farmer and write this letter.

## Activity 10: An Old Foundation Investigation

Performance Objective: The student will investigate the foundation of an old building and try to determine what type of building existed and its function(s).

Program of Studies: Social Studies, II, V
Problem-solving Skills, I, III, V, VI
Mathematics, Whole Numbers II, V

Procedures:

1. Find the foundation of an old demolished building.
2. Measure the entire foundation, record it in a drawing, and compare its size to a structure that the student is familiar with.
3. Locate any internal walls, dividers, or stairs that might indicate where rooms or a cellar could have been.
4. Determine what materials were used in the foundation.
5. Search the area and attempt to locate any clues at to its original use(s).
6. Try to determine if the age and type of surrounding plant life reveal any information about the foundation and the original building.
7. Try to decide what may have caused this structure to reach its present condition.

Materials:

Paper and pencil
Tape measure

Evaluation:

1. List whatever clues you used to determine the foundation's former use.
2. Make a sketch of the building as you think it might have looked.

## Activity 11: A Mill Site Investigation

Performance Objective: The student will investigate an old mill site and identify the original functions of whatever remains can be found.

Program of Studies: Social Studies, I, II, V, VII
Problem-solving Skills, I, III, V, VI

Procedures:

1. Visit an old mill site.
2. Locate the source of natural power that was used to operate the mill.
3. Look for clues indicating where the water wheel must have been and describe its function.
4. Look for signs of a raceway and describe its function.
5. Look for evidence of an old road leading to and from the mill.
6. Make a sketch of how the old mill might have looked.
7. If a photograph is available, use it to locate the place the photographer stood when he snapped the picture.
8. Try to determine whether the mill was still operating when the photo was taken.
9. Describe some of the features in the photo that are still visible.
10. Determine what season of the year the photograph was taken.
11. Indicate the type of mill you think it was, i.e., bone, grist, saw, and so on, and include a reason for your answer.

Materials:

Paper and pencil
Photographs

Evaluation:

1. Explain why this water-powered mill is no longer in use.
2. List five advantages water-powered mills had over today's factories.

## Activity 12: An Old Street Investigation

Performance Objective: The student will make specific observations to determine how and why a street has developed.

Program of Studies: Social Studies, I, II, V
Problem-solving Skills, I, III, V, VI
Mathematics, Whole Numbers, II, V

Procedures:

1. Visit an old street.

2. Identify the older houses on the street and formulate a theory on where the street originally began and why it started at this location.

3. Speculate on the direction the street developed and which of the following indicators are significant:

   a) Major thoroughfares in the area
   b) Age of houses
   c) Architectural differences
   d) Width of street
   e) Size of trees
   f) Lot sizes
   g) House sizes and materials
   h) Fence or fence line

4. Consider differences in the size and structure of each house. Discuss whether any of the houses are architecturally similar or were built in the same period of time.

5. Look for evidence indicating location of the original road.

6. Estimate the distance from each house to the street. Find evidence indicating which houses were built close to the original road.

7. Sketch the street and the houses and speculate as to the first or oldest house.

Materials

Paper and pencil
Tape measure

Evaluation:

1. Sketch a street as it would be constructed today, include buildings and other normal facilities, and compare it to the sketch of the old street (#7).

2. State reasons and causes for development of streets long ago compared to development of streets today.